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WRL NEWS

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No 157

Get Your "Masterpiece" Now

"The 1970 calendar is a masterpiece," wrote Anita Brest of Nashua, New Hampshire, in re-ordering. Maybe you would like to re-order—or to order, if you have not yet done so. There is a limited supply left.

The topic of this year's calendar is civil disobedience (with 60 photos). The price is $2 apiece, $5 for 3, $10 for 6.

. . . And Get Your Peace Poetry

Speaking of calendars, enthusiasts over the 1967 and 1968 calendars which featured anti-war poetry will be glad to know that ALL those poems— and many more on the subject of peace—are now available in a book just published "Poems of Resistance."

A special order blank is enclosed with this issue. The book has been added to our regular literature list.

AMMON HENNACY DIES

Ammon Hennacy, the individual who has picketed, fasted and been arrested for peace demonstrations more times than anyone in the movement, died January 14 of a heart attack in Salt Lake City. He was in the hospital 6 days but his condition had not appeared critical.

He was 77 years old. Along with Dorothy Day, he was for many years a moving spirit of the Catholic Worker Movement. He also was a longtime member of WRL and the recipient of the League's annual peace award for 1969. His book titled originally "Autobiography of a Catholic Anarchist" was changed to "Book of Ammon." He quit the Church several years ago. His life was one filled with nonviolent direct action.

He engaged in individual action as often as he did in group action. One-man picket demonstrations and fasts were his specialty. While still a church member he, along with Dorothy Day picketed the late Cardinal Spellman when the latter resorted to scabbing in a gravediggers strike. Ammon was one of the pioneers of income tax refusal and demonstrated frequently in the ultimately successful campaign to end nuclear tests in the atmosphere. He was a unique figure in the movement and one who will not easily be forgotten.

TWO VIGILS OF PROTEST . . .

. . . On The Pentagon War Against Vietnam

photo by Diana Davies

Robert Lowell, poet and playwright, (at right) participates in fifth anniversary of the Saturday Times Square Vigil. Sponsored by New York peace groups but manned largely by WRLers, the Vigil now is in its sixth year. WRLers are urged to join the vigil any Saturday between 12:30 and 2:30.

. . . On The Police War Against Panthers

photo by Judith Mage

Ossie Davis, actor, participates in Christmas week vigil opposite Women's House of Detention. At right, another vegiler reads the names of Black Panthers murdered or imprisoned and of other political prisoners. WRL helped to man the vigil.
(Read David McReynold's article "The Pacifist and the Panther" on p. 3)

XUM

A.J. AND THE '70s

In entering a new decade, still escalating the struggle for peace in Vietnam, one cannot help thinking of A. J. Muste and the irreplaceable leadership he provided in that struggle—right up until the day of his death—February 11, 1967. (He was born Jan. 8, 1885)

During the October 15 Moratorium and the November 15 March on Washington, many of us paused to regret that A. J. could not be present to witness the movement's unprecedented upsurge. Though three years have elapsed, many of us continue missing him.

For A.J. fans and others who are interested, we have the following literature:

ESSAYS OF A.J. MUSTE, edited by Nat Hentoff $7.00

PEACE AGITATOR, Hentoff's biography of A.J. $3.00

WIN MAGAZINE'S A.J. MEMORIAL ISSUE 25c

LIBERATION MAGAZINE'S A.J. MEMORIAL ISSUE $1.50

We also have four tape recordings, the A. J. Muste Memorial Series, monaural, two-track, 3¾-inch tapes, for $20.

KING—A FILMED RECORD, FROM MONTGOMERY TO MEMPHIS, a full-length movie directed by Ely Landau, opens on March 24 at 300 theaters across the country. All proceeds for that night's performance go to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the King Memorial Fund.

Donates $5 Legion Award to WRL

"The enclosed $5 was through a strange twist of fate awarded to me last June at Commencement exercises by the American Legion," writes Linda Antinore, now a student at the State University of New York at Buffalo. "Please do something loving with it."

ENROLLMENT BLANK

Send to War Resisters League
339 Lafayette Street, N. Y., N.Y. 10012

WAR IS A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY.
I THEREFORE AM DETERMINED NOT TO SUPPORT ANY KIND OF WAR, INTERNATIONAL OR CIVIL, AND TO STRIVE FOR THE REMOVAL OF ALL THE CAUSES OF WAR

signature

address

city

state *zip code*

PENTAGON DEMONSTRATORS ACQUITTED

Bent Andresen, Edward Gottlieb, Jim Peck and Barbara Reynolds, arrested on Hiroshima Day for reading anti-war quotations in front of Defense Secretary Laird's office, were acquitted—along with others who in previous weeks had been arrested for reading the names of the war dead in the Pentagon's shopping concourse.

In his decision, U.S. Magistrate Stanley King held: "The regulation insofar as it provides a criminal offense for 'unwarranted loitering and assembly' (the charge against those arrested) at the Pentagon, is void for obscurity in meaning and overbreadth and may not be enforced."

Lawrence Friedman handled the cases on behalf of A Quaker Action Group, WRL and the other pacifist groups sponsoring the demonstrations.

Submit Nominations by Feb. 20

All nominations for the WRL executive committee and national committee must be submitted in writing to the League office by Feb. 20.

Any WRL member can submit a nomination. However, nominations submitted by less than five members are subject to approval by the executive committee as a prerequisite to being on the ballot.

Persons nominated for the executive committee must be able to attend monthly meetings in New York.

NEW LITERATURE

POEMS OF RESISTANCE. See notice on page 1 and enclosed order blank $3.95

CIVILIAN RESISTANCE AS A NATIONAL DEFENSE. Previously available only in hardback at $7.95, this anthology by Adam Roberts on nonviolent action against aggression is finally in an English paperback $1.65
(This book is the only substitute for the pamphlet CIVILIAN DEFENSE, now out of print and for many years a popular item on our literature list)

FACE TO FACE WITH YOUR DRAFT BOARD. The most complete answers to the question "What do I *do* at my personal hearing?" are contained in this book written by Allan Blackman for World Without War Council 95c

ON THE RESISTANCE. A 17-page pamphlet by Dave Harris, former WRL West Coast field representative now serving a 3-year jail sentence, and Mike Ferber 10c

ATLANTA REPORT
By Dennis Adelsberger

At the beginning of December, the WRL executive committee voted to continue its monthly grant of $200 to the Atlanta Workshop in Nonviolence for one more year.

As most of you already know, I have retired from my job as coordinator. I will stay in Atlanta for a while and will continue to be AWIN's military counselor. Steve Hipps is the new coordinator. Steve worked with AWIN during the spring and summer, before going to work for SCLC—until last month.

At this time we are involved in Moratorium activities, training draft counselors, and getting the office in shape after a long sequence of problems in moving. (We now have a store front at 253 North Avenue). With the quick changes in politics, it is difficult to project too far into the future. But we try to be responsive to what others think we should be doing.

Most of AWIN's income comes from individual pledges and contributions. When contributions drop, the first cut in our budget is salary. We have never been able to pay a living wage to coordinators. Anyone who has talked to me or Henry or Sue or Pete Grannis probably knows that very well. AWIN coordinators develop a hungry look in about a month.

As outgoing coordinator, I would like to ask you to keep this in mind when you are considering a contribution to some needy group. We all realize that there are many groups which deserve our financial and active support. But amidst all the affluence, we should be committed to seeing AWIN's coordinator make more than $100 a month.

AN OMISSION CORRECTED

EDITOR'S NOTE—This note from John Daniels is prompted by Ted Emery's letter to the Knickerbocker News (reprinted in WRL NEWS) in which he informed Albanyites about the existence of WRL but did not mention any local *peace group.)*

"In the September-October WRL NEWS you had an Albany, N.Y. item which raised the question as to whether there is a *local* peace group in the area of the state capital.

"The answer is: yes, there are several. There is the Capital Area Peace Center, 727 Madison Ave., Albany 12208. There is a chapter of SANE. In nearby Schenectady, there is a strong branch of Clergy & Laymen Concerned About Vietnam. Since March 1, 1967, every Wednesday from noon till one there has been a vigil in front of the state capitol. On the October 15 Moratorium some 800 persons participated. Please print this information in the next WRL NEWS."

THE PACIFIST AND THE PANTHER

by David McReynolds

The Black Panthers is a small political party consisting of, at most, several hundred militant blacks, largely young men. They were organized originally in Oakland, California and won publicity in their early days for carrying guns in public and pledging themselves to the armed defense of the ghetto against the police.

It would be easy for the casual observer to link the Panthers with their guns and bodyguards and military discipline, with the Brown Shirts of Germany or the Minutemen and American Nazis. Pete Hamill, one of New York's better columnists, did just that in a column in the New York Post of January 6. Hamill also accused the Left of paranoia for its belief that there is a plot to wipe out the Panthers.

The fact is that the Panthers are being hunted down and wiped out, and that is not paranoia but a fact. Huey Newton is in Federal Prison, Bobby Hutton was shot down by police in Oakland as he walked out of a building with his hands in the air. Eldridge Cleaver, his parole revoked by the Reagan appointed parole board, fled to Algerian exile. Bobby Seale has been sentenced to *four years* for contempt of court at Attorney General Mitchell's "Reichstag Trial" in Chicago. Twenty-one Panthers in New York have been indicted for plotting to blow up Manhattan department stores and the Bronx Botanical Gardens. Their bail is $100,000 each in violation of the Bill of Rights, they are being held in solitary confinement, and if they were found innocent tomorrow they would have suffered nearly a year of prison. On December 4 the Chicago police broke into a private apartment and shot and killed Panther leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark. The next day the Los Angeles police engaged in a gun battle lasting several hours with Panthers in the Watts area before the Panthers finally surrendered. The police, as in every case I know of, had begun firing. Attorney General Mitchell has made very clear his hatred of the Panthers and J. Edgar Hoover has echoed that line.

What The Panthers Are Like

There are several points that need to be made. The Panthers are unique among black militant groups in that they reject "cultural nationalism" or "black capitalism" and urge an alliance of black ghetto radicals with white radical youth with the aim of overthrowing the government. Many black militants are anti-semitic but the Panthers—at least officially—are not. (They do sharply oppose the State of Israel, but that is part of their Third World, New Left orientation.) They have guns with them but in every case I know of the cops have started shooting first and the Panthers have fired only in response. The Panthers are radical, Marxist-oriented, ghetto-born. They have sought out the most desperate, frustrated, angry young men. It is a great mistake for whites to romanticize the Panthers, to think they are all as rational and appealing as Eldridge Cleaver and Huey Newton, or to think their program of free breakfasts for ghetto youth is more than a part of their total program.

One problem with the Panthers, is in fact, their appeal to whites who simply do not realize the fury that has been bred in the ghetto. I know, from my Peace and Freedom Congressional campaign last year, when I was politically linked with the Panthers, that while I was nervous, angry, and frightened with the Panther speaker who would arrive at a meeting, the white youth were delighted by the drama of it.

I thought later, after that first encounter, that the Panther was as nervous and frightened by us as I was by him. A ghetto black, speaking to middle class whites, walking on unfamiliar turf, and the terror ran both ways as we both tried—and failed—to build some kind of political "exit" from violent conflict.

From the pacifist point of view there are some points that must be made, with humility but frankly. First, the bodyguards were window dressing for whites—they have yet to save a single Panther from death and in fact they provoke violence. Second, while the Panthers originally picked up guns to defend the ghetto from police brutality, and in order to be forever free of relying on white liberals for protection, they misjudged where American society is at. To pick up the gun in the present situation is courageous but it is also to become a target. So, inevitably, somewhere between 19 and 28 Black Panthers have been gunned down by police (the figures are in dispute) while at best only four police have been killed by Panthers. Now the Panthers, if they are to survive, must turn to unarmed whites for help and now also we see that the logic of nonviolence applies not only to the South, but to the North as well. Third, one of the incidental tragedies is that the remaining Panthers are riddled with mutual suspicion because they are riddled with police agents, something which is going to happen to any group in this country which seeks victory through a secret conspiracy rather than an open revolution.

Why We Must Defend Them

But those remarks are all irrelevent, in a certain basic sense. I have sought very briefly to put the Panthers in some perspective but it would not matter from a pacifist point of view if the Panthers hated Jews, advocated gas chambers for all whites, and had a political program of absolute fascism—we still would be bound to defend their right to exist as individuals and as a political group. In some ways it would be easier for us to defend the Panthers if they were fascists, because there would not then be the problem of ambiguity that comes when someone is so close to you in some ways and so separated from you in other ways.

A defense of the Panthers is not a defense of their attitude toward violence, nor their attitude toward the police, though it ought to be an understanding of why they preach hatred of cops and why they carry guns. This is, of course, the crucial difference between the Panthers and the Minutemen. No one is beating up the Minutemen, or shooting them down. The FBI does not, in fact, seem to know too much about them, nor to care too much about them. Whites who join the Minutemen did not grow up as outcasts, beaten by brutalized cops. The violence of the Minutemen is one of choice, that of the Panthers is simply a reflection of the ghetto—as, for that matter, police behavior in the ghetto is also a reflection of the brutalization of ghetto life. It is the pacifist who must declare, out of his own values, that there are neither Panthers nor Pigs, neither Niggers nor Honkies but only human beings. And it is the radical who knows that wrong as the Panthers may be on a dozen points, they are being singled out by the government because alone of militant black groups they demand revolution and advocate cooperation with white radicals.

Today as always the front line of freedom is that group under attack. The Panthers are not the vanguard of the revolution but, whether we like it or not, they are the front line in the very real struggle against the Mitchell-Nixon Administration as it seeks to institutionalize and legitimize political murder at home—as Johnson sought to legitimize it in Vietnam.

XUM

NONVIOLENCE IS MORE

by Jerry Coffin
WRL Membership & Project Secretary

The War Resisters League was born in struggle. Over the years the struggles that gave birth to the WRL have continued. At times the WRL through its members was in the forefront providing inspiration and example for others. At times, history relegated WRL to quiessence and members withdrew from active struggle and worked to maintain pacifist morale by quiet strengthening one another.

Today I think the League is once again being called by history relegated WRL to quiescence and members withdrew other dehumanizing practices by the warmaking corporate state. This may sound like inflated organization ego. I don't think it is.

Our Past

Our past is alive and active but recently I've been disturbed by trends among pacifists. Some of us are, I think, misreading pacifism. We're forgetting the last twenty, the last fifty years and placing pacifism outside of history. We disparage our relevancy to movements for basic social change when our own history shows that we have been relevant. Indeed we *must* be relevant if our pacfiist convictions are not hollow moralisms. As certain parts of the Movement have moved into wild, left adventurist behavior we've boiled a history of positive, constructive struggle into one phrase, "Don't throw that rock!" We've slipped into head shaking and tsk tsking. Our reason for existing in an organized form often seems to be to provide the negative counterpoint to every Movement action. The Black Panthers upset us. The Yippies confuse us. The draft file burners anger us. The Weathermen sicken us. I know this isn't true of all League members. As individuals League members can relate to the Black Panthers and work against the oppression the state machinery is bringing down on them. As individuals, League members can cope with the Yippies, support or understand draft file burners or burn files themselves. As individuals League members can intelligently criticize Weathermen on political as well as moral grounds, and undertake militant and positive nonviolent direct action. However, *we don't do things together, as League members in a coherent organized form.* And because we don't our impact is blunted, our program is diffuse, and pacifists tend to drift into the negativism I've characterized. I said the League is being called by history. What do I mean?

Our Present

Right now the Movement is splintered. Parts of the New Left are following the same factionalism road that led to the destruction of the old Left as an effective force. Other parts of the Movement have lost touch with reality and are manifesting the psychosis of this nation-state by engaging in mindless violence. The Movement seems incapable of providing vehicles for struggle against the warmaking corporate state at precisely the time when large numbers of people are looking for a place in the struggle. The WRL can, as in past years, provide the positive vehicle for these people if League members decide that's what we want to do. We can get ourselves together and show that you don't have to engage in dehumanizing polemics to act. We can get organized in local groups and give kids a life affirming program of nonviolent direct action so they aren't forced into the death patterned styles proclaimed by some who think that's what fighting imperialism is about.

Beyond the Movement the children of middle America are manifesting simultaneous mass alienation from this society. Just as we can provide an organization vehicle for the Movement so we can reach out to those justifiably alienated and bring them into the struggle. I think history is telling us that we ought to get together now and do the job the WRL can do. To me nonviolence is positive struggle and a constant search for the better way to live. Nonviolence is more than "Don't throw that rock!"

Creative experimentation in affirming life values is central to nonviolent action. A life affirming mode of action is the essence of our much debated means-ends nexus. The League's been experimenting with an organization form of life affirmation. We originally called it the WRL Chapters. The idea was that we *strengthen* one another when we are *with* one another. That pacifists are blasted from so many angles that we, more than most, "get by with a little help from our friends." Further that while some Left factions can make it through intellectual exercise pacifists needed to be acting-experimenting——constantly in affirming life values if we had any hope of achieving our ends. For us there is no single historic agent of change that will bring universal peace, love and brotherhood.

Our Future

Experiments have taken place and I feel that our concept of League members getting together in their own local areas to study and engage in nonviolent direct action is sound. Our organization form—WRL Chapters—was in my opinion not sound. Nonviolence needs freedom. It needs to be loose so it can be creative and the model of a mother hen with her chapter chicks is not an organization form that promotes looseness. Perhaps the WRL Action Center concept will give us a form more consonant, with our style and content.

The WRL Action Center is a community organization. Its WRL members banding together in whatever way fits their needs engaging in nonviolent direct action, membership outreach and study. Perhaps most of all it's a vehicle for positive struggle which helps each one of us to avoid drifting into negative patterns vis-a-vis the Movement, our sisters and brothers, life. It's doing anything that's joyful, anything that affirms life and fights racism, imperialism, militarism, war. The National Office is a support organism that tries to keep Action Centers informed of what's happening nationally and what other Action Centers are doing. Just as the Regional Offices are regionally autonomous so that Action Centers are locally autonomous. The WRL Action Centers can be the coherent, organized arm of the League membership—if that's what we want.

Write to me at the League National Office if you're ready for the hard, often disappointing but rewarding life loving struggle. Write me if you want to get in on the collective search that may get us out of where we as a people are. I'll send you information about forming a community WRL Action Center or campus Workshop in Nonviolence. And if you're a traveling person get in touch because the League has work for you too.

The League is you and me. We can answer the call from history if we want to.

XUM

Is Latin American Revolution Possible?

by Glenn Smiley

Latin America is victimized by the rankest sort of imperialistic interventionism, particularly by the U.S. The financial military and cultural "invasion" is spoken of as something that has already taken place. American business maintains that Latin American investments are "really not that profitable," but at the same time continues to buy up banks, radio and television stations. The invasion of the Dominican Republic and the sponsored attempt to invade Cuba are as if they were yesterday in the minds of the Latin American, and as far as cultural intervention is concerned, it is said that a person can travel from the Rio Grande to Tierra del Fuego without missing a single one of his favorite U.S. television programs. While it may be true that Latin American investments and business represent but a small part of U.S. interests in the world, to Latin America it is a staggering proportion of total investments.

In light of the above it is small wonder that the movements of liberation occupy a large part of the thinking of the "awakened" Latin American. Most of the talk in radical groups, in and out of the universities, is of the traditional sort when resistance to the oligarchies and their supportive North American interests is under discussion. In other words, "revolution" *must* be of the armed and violent sort. It matters little that with the exception of Cuba, and a few other isolated instances that have usually been followed in quick succession by counter-revolution, violence has a remarkably poor track record in Latin America for bringing about authentic revolution. In spite of the hundreds of "revolutions" since liberation from the colonial powers there is not a one of these revolutions that has been completed. The Cuban story, while promising to many, is a story not yet completely told, and the Mexican revolution, so long looked upon as complete, is beginning to come apart at the seams in light of the challenge of the students and isolated political defeats for PRI, the official governmental party.

Alternatives to Violence

Of more recent date thoughtful and active people in the church, trade unions and universities are beginning to seek alternatives to violence for making the revolution on the theory that "it is a stupid rabbit that only has one exit to his burrow." This search for alternatives is the offspring of a strange union of frustration at the weakness of traditional weapons, and the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. with the attendant publicity about his "methodology."

There seems to be a general interest in this alternative and its possible relevance to the Latin American situation. Within the short space of a year and a half about 20 groups have come into being in as many major cities, dedicated to investigation and experimentation in revolutionary nonviolence as a means of changing the circumstances and the structures of the Latin American society. Most of these groups have grown out of a series of seminars and schools of nonviolence that have brought together leaders in church, labor and university. Those attending were asked only if they believed in social change and no reference was made to whether they did or did not believe in nonviolence. In fact, nonviolence is so new in Latin America that it would have been hard to find enough people who believed in it to hold even one seminar, much less the dozen that have been held and the eight more that are scheduled for the winter and spring.

But, in an atmosphere of earnest inquiry, where tactical and strategic nonviolence is presented as a revolutionary alternative, antagonisms have turned to curiosity, curiosity to interest, and some of this interest has turned into commitment. In one of the more recent seminars in Quito, Ecuador, the majority opinion at the end of the event was that although the participants still believed that violence might be necessary at some point in the revolutionary process, nonviolence was certainly the only beginning place, and was one of the ways in which revolution might be brought about. Even here there was a substantial minority that came to the conclusion that nonviolence was the *only* way to make an authentic Revolution.

Most of the above mentioned groups have begun to experiment in small ways with nonviolent direct action, knowing full well that the first step in the process is the development of cadres of leaders that are skilled in their new weaponry system. The experimentation is often short of what some choose to call revolutionary, but it is a planned effort to both train and to "conscienticize," or awaken the masses to the viability of this particular option of nonviolence.

Action in Venezuela

One example that is worth noting is an effort to prepare a "welcome" for Nelson Rockefeller on his proposed visit to Venezuela during his ill-fated errand for President Nixon. Since the event was advertized well in advance, a careful study was made of the nation's dependence upon Rockefeller and upon the United States. A team of experts went to work and prepared a carefully documented 13-page paper on their dependence upon the money of the coming visitor.

Having prepared the study and grounded themselves in its defense, the group then began to plan a religious processional to the "19 Stations of the Cross," in this case the 19 supermarkets that Rockefeller owns in Caracas. Eventually President Caldera asked Rockefeller *not* to make the visit, so the group somewhat reduced the processional to visit only four places. In front of Creole Oil Co. a dollar bill was saturated with gasoline and burned in the midst of the religious service as a symbolic declaration of independence. In front of one of the huge supermarkets the group took four typically American products, and after pouring them on the ground, saturated them with gasoline and burned them as a further religious dedication to the pritnciples of freedom and independence. Only 40 people participated, but hundreds were made aware that there was a way, other than violent, to protest and to declare independence and resistance.

Due to the cancellation of the Rockefeller tour the group found themselves with several hundred copies of the above mentioned study, but the meeting of the Inter-American Bishops held in Caracas in July gave them their chance to distribute all of them into the hands of the leaders of the Church.

Similar training activities are under way among other groups. It is now clear that a movement has emerged which has a well-defined nonviolent line. In February the various groups are seeking to consolidate their gains and develop a "global" strategy at a leadership seminar in Costa Rica. The disturbed and obscure future must come to terms with this movement if authentic revolution is to occur.

XUM

NEW GROUP IN TAX REFUSAL DRIVE

War Tax Resistance, a broadly-based organization including nonpacifists as well as pacifists, has launched a major organizing and recruiting campaign on income tax refusal this year. The campaign will climax with demonstrations at Internal Revenue Service offices on April 15.

Bradford Lyttle, the co-ordinator, hopes to decentralize the operation as widely as possible, setting up headquarters in as many localities as possible.

WRLers willing to serve as local coordinators, or to take an active part in the campaign, should notify Bradford Lyttle at once. National WTR headquarters is located in the same building as WRL (In fact, already, a number of people have confused the two groups because of the similarity of initials).

TELEPHONE TAX RESISTANCE

The telephone war tax is one which every person who has a telephone can noncooperate with by refusing to pay.

In December WRL members received a letter from the WRL urging them to refuse the telephone war tax. It outlined the reasons why a mass phone war tax refusal campaign is strategically wise at this time. It mentioned that, moral imperative aside, refusing this war tax can help force the U.S. out of Vietnam by raising the domestic cost of the war. This doesn't mean that a mass refusal of the telephone war tax will deprive the government of significant revenue to bankrupt the war effort. It does mean that the revenue collecting mechanisms of the state can be overburdened to an extent that it will be unable to enforce the tax. The break created in the revenue collecting apparatus can then be extended to other areas (surtax for an example) or at least contribute to a "desanctification" of cooperation with the warfare state. The December letter urged members to refuse the war tax and provided a clip apart sheet of four anti-war tax leaflets to mail to friends. We again urge members to act on the telephone war tax. The staff has prepared a Sample Action Outline on telephone war tax refusal for use by organizers. It has already been mailed to our organizers list and is available to others on request.

How To Refuse The Phone War Tax

Refusing the phone war tax is easy. When you receive your phone bill simply subtract the amount shown as "Federal Tax" from the total amount due and pay the bill as usual. When paying the bill enclose a letter explaining what you have done and why. To maximize the impact send letters explaining your stand to Congressmen, the President, and the editor of your local newspaper. In subsequent months continue to subtract the "Federal Tax" (and the amount of "Unpaid Balance" since in many areas the phone company will continue to carry the unpaid taxes on the bill for a period of time) each time enclosing a brief letter when paying the bill explaining why you are taking the action. War Tax Resistance, 399 Lafayette, N.Y.C. 10012, is providing a small card at nominal cost (12 for 25c) which is designed for just this purpose.

What Happens When You Refuse

One thing that doesn't happen to phone tax refusers is discontinuation of their phone service. That happened only once—in Mississippi—and the Lawyers' Constitutional Defense Committee, the Southern arm of the ACLU, is now working on getting the Mississippi Telephone and Communications Company to restore service.

IRS procedures for collecting unpaid phone taxes vary from place to place, but in essence they are quite similar. Usually IRS starts by sending the refuser a "Form 17" (in some cases Form L-45) demanding the unpaid amount or some portion of it. (Since IRS is usually behind in its bookkeeping and often inaccurate, the amounts they ask for can be pretty weird.) This is followed by another form, usually TY-69, and then, if this fails to get the tax refuser to pay up, the case is turned over to the collection department of the refuser's local IRS office. At this point it becomes difficult to predict precisely what will happen because the individual collection agent who gets the case has quite a bit of leeway as to how to proceed. Most often he will come to the refuser's home unannounced and, finding him not there, leave his card with instructions to, contact IRS the very next day. Or he may call, Or he may not bother to do anything but go straight to the refuser's bank.

Should he make contact with the refuser he will have two things that he wants to get out of the conversation. First, he'll attempt to talk the refuser into being a nice guy and paying up voluntarily. After all, he'll say, the protest has been made, but he'll be wrong because the whole point of the refusal was to not pay. Then he'll ask about the refuser's assets; bank accounts, employment, etc. This is either because he's too lazy to look that information up in the various files that IRS has access to or because he genuinely has no other way of finding out. In either case we think the best policy is to smile sweetly and say nothing.

IRS may issue a summons ordering the refuser to appear at the local office but has no way of legally compelling the refuser to answer questions once he has complied by appearing.

In most cases IRS finds out where the refuser works or banks and proceeds directly to serve a notice of levy for the amount in question. Sadly there's no way to stop them at that point and the refuser may as well reconcile himself to having that sum go into the government coffers. He may be able to comfort himself with the thought that it costs the IRS about $70 to collect his $3.43 or whatever and that IRS will have to follow the same procedure to collect any more.

In some rare cases—either because the phone tax refuser has no other assets or just because that particular IRS agent is nasty—assets other than bank accounts or salaries have been seized. In four cases that we know cars have been seized (the seizure of one was prevented by the owner sitting in front of it,) two people's rent deposits were seized and in one case they got a safety deposit box. No doubt other variations have been dreamed up by IRS. When it gets down to this kind of stuff there's generally nothing the refuser can do except, if he wants to, throw himself before the mercy of the collection agent by revealing the location of his bank account and suggesting that he levy on that instead. (That acoount can be closed later so that the information IRS has gained in this way is made useless for later collections). While levying a bank account is far easier for IRS, there is no way to compel the agent to be reasonable. There are, however, certain things that IRS can not seize. Check with War Tax Resistance for further information on this.

Resist The Warmaking State

Refusing the telephone war tax is more than a protest. It is a concrete act of resistance to the warmaking state. In practical terms there is risk involved but nowhere near the risk taken by draft resisters, deserters or the Vietnamese people. It is something evey person who has a phone can do. It will raise the domestic cost of the war in one area and, when coupled with a whole range of war resistance actions, will help force the U.S. to end its war on Vietnam.

XUM

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